# VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES

## WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Each day 11,000 babies are born in the United States who will need up to 20 vaccinations before they are 2 years old, to be protected against 11 vaccine-preventable diseases. For most of the vaccine-preventable diseases, there has been a 99% or greater reduction in morbidity. However, we cannot take high immunization coverage levels for granted. To continue to protect America's children and adults from vaccine-preventable diseases, we must attain maximum immunization coverage in all populations, establish effective partnerships, conduct reliable scientific research, implement immunization systems, and ensure vaccine safety.

## WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC provides national leadership to reduce disability and death from diseases that can be prevented through vaccination. Through the continued work of CDC vaccination programs, especially the Section 317 Grant Program and Vaccines for Children Program, outstanding progress has been made in coverage rates for children up to 2 years of age. Immunization levels for most individual vaccines such as measles, polio, Hib, hepatitis B, and three doses of diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis (DTaP) are at 90% or higher.

Disparities in childhood immunization coverage rates among racial and ethnic groups have been eliminated or greatly reduced for most vaccines. For example, in 1970, the measles immunization rate for racial and ethnic minority children was 18% lower than the rate for white children. According to the 2002 National Immunization Survey, over 93% of children 19 to 35 months of age in all races had received three or more doses of any diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and pertussis vaccines. Vaccination rates for Hispanic, white, and Asian, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander children, 19 to 35 months of age were reported to be at or above 90%, and African American vaccination coverage rates were 85%.

Licensed in 1995, the varicella vaccine for chickenpox is one of the most recently added vaccines on the recommended childhood schedule. The development of new vaccines creates opportunities for better health but also presents difficult challenges for immunization programs because they increase the complexity and cost of the immunization schedule. In spite of these challenges, great progress has been made in educating healthcare provider and the public about the benefits of the varicella vaccine. Coverage jumped from 57.5% in 1999 to over 80% in 2002; an increase of about 28% in just 3 years.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC is committed to improving the health of all Americans and individuals internationally through vaccination. Next steps include

- Extending the success of domestic childhood immunizations program to the adult population.
- Increasing and sustaining vaccine coverage levels in all populations for all recommended vaccines.
- Assisting partners in implementing proven strategies for immunization by assuring adequate vaccine supplies, supporting community- and state-based immunization registries, and focusing efforts to increase immunization in areas with low coverage levels.
- Continuously improving vaccine safety efforts by working with other agencies and partners to improve CDC's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System; expand the Vaccine Safety Datalink; and increase opportunities for communications, epidemiological, and genetic vaccine safety research.

*For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program* *January 2004*